

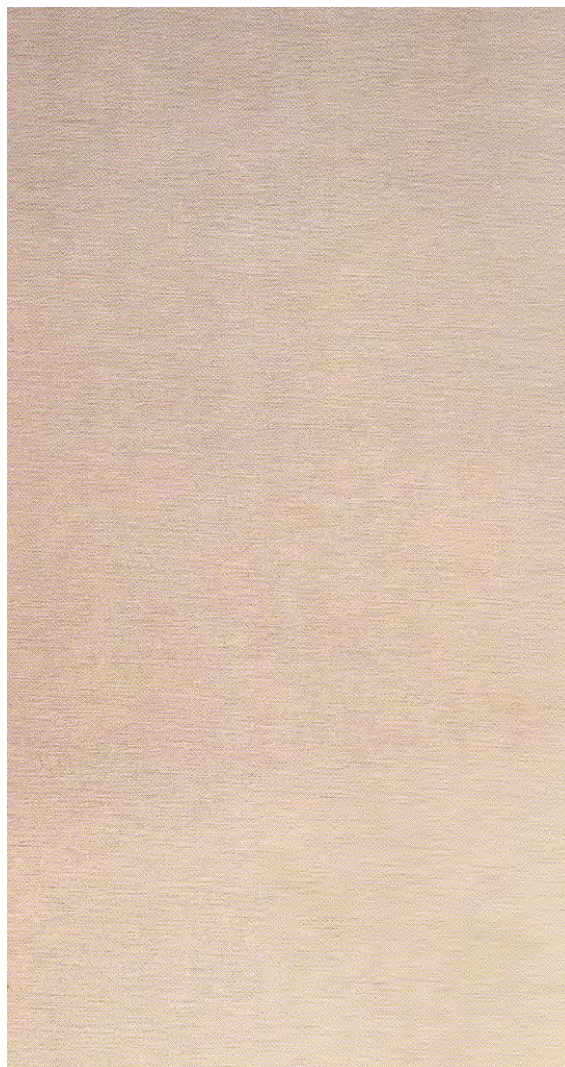
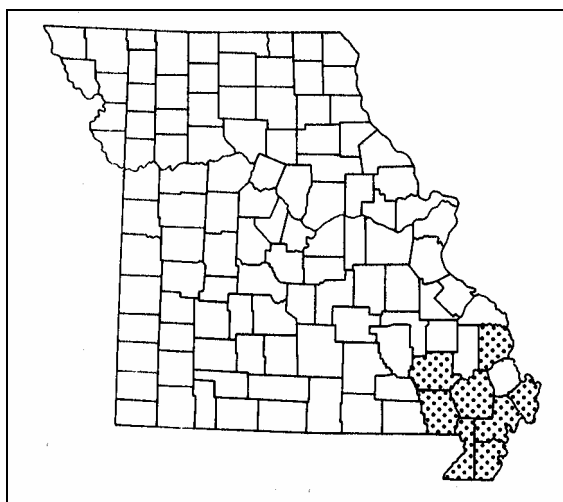
American Holly

Ilex opaca Ait.

Also called holly, prickly or evergreen holly, this is the whitest of all American hollys. It is better known for its bright red berries and spiny green leaves at Christmas than for its lumber. A more southern and eastern species, its range in Missouri is limited to the moist, well-drained sandy soils of Crowley's Ridge in southeast Missouri. It is also frequently planted as an ornamental throughout the state, but does not survive cold winters well here.

Both the sapwood and the heartwood are a uniform ivory white color, although it quickly becomes blue-stained if not properly cared for after cutting. The bark is light gray, thin and smooth with little warts. The wood has no characteristic odor or taste; it is close-grained and diffuse porous. It is moderately hard, tough, but not strong and requires considerable care in drying to avoid checking and warping. It is not durable when exposed to conditions favoring decay.

The wood of holly is not abundant, but is available. It takes dye or stain well, but is favored for its pure white color for inlays and marquetry where the white color contrasts with darker woods. It is also used in carvings, fine furniture, some cabinet work, small turnings, small musical instruments, piano keys, wood cuts, novelties and handles. The fine grain makes it suitable for wood engraving. It is interesting wood for the home workshop.



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